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News Release

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2 plead guilty to distributing cocaine

The second of two defendants pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court for his role in connection with distributing more than 500 grams of cocaine in Minneapolis.

Mario Maya-Villa, 19, unknown address, pleaded to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 500 or more grams of cocaine. Maya-Villa entered his plea Sept. 15 in Minneapolis before United States District Court Judge David Doty.

A second defendant, Dino Cruz-Cruz, 27, unknown address, also pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy. He entered his plea Aug. 1 before Judge Doty.

According to their respective plea agreements, both defendants admitted that from an unknown time through May 12 they conspired to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute in excess of 500 grams of cocaine. Cruz-Cruz also admitted that he conspired with others to distribute and possess with intent to distribute approximately 2,100 grams of cocaine.

According to a Minneapolis Police Department affidavit, authorities received information that Cruz-Cruz was importing and selling large quantities of cocaine in Minneapolis. On May 12, police arranged a "controlled buy" from Cruz-Cruz in a Target store parking lot in south Minneapolis.

A vehicle driven by Maya-Villa arrived, and police observed Cruz-Cruz exit the vehicle and enter a second vehicle. In that vehicle, Cruz-Cruz agreed to meet later to exchange \$25,000 for 1 kilogram of cocaine, and after the negotiations were completed, Cruz-Cruz returned to his vehicle and left.

Officers observed Maya-Villa drop Cruz-Cruz off near a vehicle parked at 37th and Chicago Avenue S. in Minneapolis. Cruz-Cruz entered that vehicle and the two vehicles left. Maya-Villa went to a Richfield apartment building, where he went in and left approximately 45 minutes later. Cruz-Cruz was observed driving around south Minneapolis.

According to the affidavit, at approximately 4:30 p.m., officers observed the two men

meeting again near 33rd Street and 21st Avenue in south Minneapolis. Maya-Villa parked his vehicle, entered Cruz-Cruz's and the two drove to an apartment building located on Minnehaha Avenue in south Minneapolis. Maya-Villa exited the vehicle, entered the building, and was observed standing at the building's rear entry.

Cruz-Cruz met Maya-Villa at the building door, both went inside and entered an apartment. The two later left and drove to a nearby car wash to complete the transaction discussed in the Target store parking lot, the affidavit states.

Police arrested the two men at the car wash, and recovered approximately 1 kilogram of cocaine in a shoe box. During the execution of a search warrant of the south Minneapolis apartment, police noted that it appeared to be a "stash" location, and found wrapping materials, vacuum bags, a vacuum sealer, several scales, knives and other items commonly used for cutting and packaging cocaine.

In a hidden compartment in a hallway closet, officers recovered approximately 1 kilogram of cocaine, an additional 5 ounces of cocaine packaged in 1-ounce quantities and a 9-millimeter, semi-automatic pistol.

Cruz-Cruz and Maya-Villa each face a potential maximum penalty of 40 years in prison on the conspiracy count. Judge Doty will determine their sentences at a future date.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Minneapolis Police Department, the Metro Gang Strike Force and the Drug Enforcement Administration, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David P. Steinkamp.